

**Testimony of Rev. Shelley D.B. Copeland for
The Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities**

2/5/09

Good afternoon, Senator Looney and Representative Janowski and members of the Executive and Legislative Nominations Committee. I am thankful for this opportunity to appear before your committee and I am honored to be nominated by Governor Rell to serve on The Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities.

As a life-long resident of Connecticut, I was born into a family committed to human rights. My father was a civil rights activist in sixties and early seventies in the northwest corner of Connecticut and was the founder of an organization called, "Concern," which worked to bring black and white people together to advocate for racial justice. Therefore, some of my earliest childhood memories include witnessing meetings with diverse writers, teachers and activists committed to working for social change.

I currently serve as the President and CEO of The Conference of Churches, an organization with a mission "to achieve social justice for all people through faith-based leadership, education, advocacy and partnerships." The last 20 years of my career have been devoted to caring for those who are often underserved. Prior to my work at The Conference I was a Pastor and I served the Department of Children and Families as Assistant Regional Director for Program Services and Assistant Director of Public Information.

I have a Bachelor of Arts in Communication from Central Connecticut State University; a Master of Arts in Religious Leadership from Hartford Seminary; a Master of Arts in Divinity from Yale University and I am currently a Doctoral Candidate at Hartford Seminary. I am committed to the mission of the commission, which is demonstrated by my career path and educational background. I appreciate your time and welcome the opportunity to answer any questions you may have for me. Thank you.